DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 274 659 SP 028 150

TITLE Miller Lite Report on Women in Sports. Summary.
INSTITUTION New World Decisions, Ltd., Iselin, NJ.
SPONS AGENCY Miller Brewing Co., Milwaukee, WI.; Women's Sports Foundation.
PUB DATE Dec 85
NOTE 17p.; For the full report, see SP 028 149.
PUB TYPE Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Coeducation; *Life Style; Lifetime Sports; *Social Attitudes; *Team Sports; *Womens Athletics

ABSTRACT

This document is a copy of the survey questionnaire responded to by 1,682 members of the Women's Sport Foundation. The questions focused on the following areas: (1) personal sports interests; (2) personal background; (3) sports participation; (4) interest in and attitude toward spectator sports; and (5) general opinion on women in sports. A brief summary is presented of survey findings. (JD)

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Summary

MILLER LITE REPORT ON WOMEN IN SPORTS

IN COOPERATION WITH THE WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Conducted
by

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December, 1985

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Coed sports activities have become a new reality for athletic women in America today, a transformation accompanied by a serious search for athletic partners of similar skill levels, particularly among younger women, and a confident certainty that participation in sports does *not* diminish femininity. Among women sports enthusiasts today, a commitment to "feminism" has little relation to athletic attitudes and behavior, and the women who were both most active in organized sports/fitness activities in their teens and twenties or who are most active today tend to share a single specific childhood experience: they played mostly with boys or mixed gender groups rather than mostly with other girls.

These are some of the major findings of one of the most comprehensive surveys of athletic women undertaken in the United States. Commissioned by Lite Beer from Miller in cooperation with the Women's Sports Foundation, the study represents the responses of 1682 athletic women.

Conducted in September and October, 1985, by New World Decisions, a New Jersey based opinion research firm that mailed lengthy questionnaires to a random sample of 7000 members of the Foundation, the survey addresses a wide range of questions about sports/fitness activities: interest in participating or watching specific sports, early childhood experiences, the support of family and friends, current encounters with coed participation, and attitudes toward a variety of topical issues, including whether drugs are necessary to become competitive internationally, whether participation in racially mixed sports groups reduces prejudice, whether girls should play contact sports and how often women prefer to watch or participate in single sex or coed sports/fitness activities.

A Coed Transformation?

A generational shift may be occurring in American sports today, one that could transform the way children and adults encounter one another as they participate in future sports activities. Coed sports, previously found mostly among selected groups and in specific activities, have become commonplace, according to the survey of women in sports.

This coed transformation has its roots in three developments: the efforts of women to seek sports partners of equal skill, regardless of gender; the belief that women have something to teach men about humane competition; and abundant evidence of a strong self-confidence among athletic women, a clear conviction that sports participation does *not* diminish femininity. These motives for coed sports participation are all evidence of an attractive self-esteem among women sports enthusiasts, but they are accompanied by the persistence of several dilemmas.

One is that, regardless of the disappearance of a personal concern that sports and femininity are incompatible, a social concern remains: most women feel that they are too often compelled to choose between being athletic and being feminine. A second preoccupation for most women sports enthusiasts is that men are often threatened by losing to women. Despite their openness to coed activities as a means of skill enhancement, therefore, athletic women continue to experience discomfort and pay such a high price for their efforts that their behavior can best be considered a pattern of "reluctant engagement."

A generational shift may be emerging. Younger women sports enthusiasts have been far more involved in organized sports experience than older respondents. Compared to respondents aged 25 and below, at least four times as many athletic women aged 38 and above are likely to have been *non*-participants at both the pre-high school and high school varsity levels.

Distinct age categories are also associated with different degrees of coed sports participation. Younger women, in particular those 25 and below, are more likely than older counterparts to seek sports partners of similar skill levels, regardless of gender, and to play with members of the opposite sex when they do seek similar skill levels. (Those who disregard gender in both seeking and finding partners are consistently far more likely to display high levels of sports participation than are those who do not share their views.) Younger women sports enthusiasts are also less likely than older ones to agree that the sexes should be kept separate in sports. Younger women, who are also the most frequent sports participants, are apparently more comfortable than older sports enthusiasts wih coed activities.

The Importance of Opposite Sex or Mixed Gender Childhood Playmates

Perhaps one of the most statistically dramatic findings in the Miller Lite Report on Women in Sports is that the choice of childhood playmates apparently exerts an extremely powerful influence on adolescent body image, on the likelihood that girls and women will engage in or attain leadership positions in organized sports at every level, from pre-high school through college, and on adult interest in sports participation. Specifically, those athletic women who in childhood activities played mostly with boys or with mixed gender groups are far more likely to: view their adolescent body images positively, participate and attain leadership positions in organized sports at every level, and participate more actively in sports/fitness activities as adults. Perhaps equally surprising, given the extraordinary power of parents to steer children in desired directions, is that direct parental involvement of either mother or father, whether in the form of simple encouragement or active participation, has less direct relation either to organized sports participation in the teens and twenties, or to different levels of adult sports participation for the athletic women sampled in this survey.

Finally, nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents agree that girls should be allowed to play contact sports. Those most in favor are younger (25 and below), less well educated (in particular non-college graduates), and curiously, less likely to have played varsity sports in college. For this sample of committed athletic women, the most important areas for future research on women in sport are: the physiology of women as athletes (70%) and the organization of women's sports (62%).

The following is a copy of the actual survey with the total frequencies and percentages of those who responded, excluding those who answered "Don't know." The "Don't know" category has been eliminated for clarity.

Note: ( ) The number in parentheses represents the absolute number of respondents.

I. SPORTS INTEREST

1. In general, how would you classify your interest in participating in sports/fitness activities?

	%
Very high	62
Somewhat high	26
Medium	10
Somewhat low / Very low	2
	(1662)

2. How would you classify your interest in watching a sporting event?

	%
Very high	47
Somewhat high	30
Medium	16
Somewhat low / Very low	7
	(1672)

3. When you were growing up, in your neighborhood who did you generally play with as a child?

	%
Both girls and boys	55
Mostly boys	33
Mostly girls	8
Played alone	3
	(1660)

4. When you were growing up, with which family members did you participate most often in sports or physical activity? (Check all that apply.)

	%
Brothers	52
Father	39
Sisters	34
Cousins	23
Mother	16
Other	7
Uncle	6
Aunt	3
Grandfather	3
Grandmother	1
None	10
	(1682)

5. When you were growing up, who was your favorite sports role model?

	%
Female public role model	47
Male public role model	46
Male personal friend role model	4
Female personal friend role model	2
	(946)

6. Have you participated in organized athletic programs (school, Little League, town leagues, swim club, etc.) at the following levels?

	Have not participated %	Have participated actively (but not as a leader) %	Have participated as a leader %	Absolute Number
Pre-high school age teams	31	41	28	(1550)
High-school age teams (non-varsity)	26	42	32	(1484)
High school varsity	31	27	42	(1491)
College intramural teams	34	41	24	(1366)
College varsity teams	47	27	26	(1325)
Amateur teams	38	40	22	(1355)
Olympic teams	98	1	1	(1041)
Professional teams	97	2	1	(1043)

7. When you were an adolescent, how did you feel about your body?

	%
Very positively	15
Somewhat positively	32
Indifferently	20
Somewhat negatively	26
Very negatively	7
	(1641)

8. Compared to five years ago, how do you feel now about your body?

	%
Much more positively	29
More positively	33
About the same	23
More negatively	13
Much more negatively	2
	(1666)

9. When you were growing up, which family members most actively encouraged you in your athletic endeavors? (Rank three where 1 = most encouraging, 2 = second most encouraging, etc.)

	% most encouraging
Father	31
Mother	30
Brother	8
Sister	4
Other	3
Cousin	2
Grandmother	2
Aunt	1
Grandfather	1
Uncle	1
None	16
	(1766)*

*ties permitted

II. SPORTS PARTICIPATION

10. Below is a list of activities. Please indicate how often you engaged in them during the past year. Some activities you may do only in the winter or the summer. When answering how often you participate in those activities, think of how often you did them during that season.

11. (For any answer other than "never") did you engage in these activities primarily as single sex or coed activities?

	Participation Level					Single Sex or Coed		
	Every day or almost every day %	About once or twice a week %	About once a month or less %	Never %	Absolute Number	Single sex %	coed %	Absolute Number
1. Walking	49	27	14	10	(1590)	55	45	(1117)
2. Jogging/running	32	23	24	21	(1591)	66	34	(1010)
3. Calisthenics/aerobics	22	33	18	27	(1570)	66	34	(978)
4. Weightlifting	15	31	16	38	(1550)	53	47	(821)
5. Softball or baseball	17	26	21	36	(1568)	56	44	(874)
6. Bicycling	15	28	36	21	(1603)	54	46	(996)
7. Swimming	12	26	41	21	(1591)	40	60	(1025)
8. Volleyball	11	21	30	38	(1558)	40	60	(854)
9. Basketball	11	16	29	44	(1564)	49	51	(774)
10. Tennis, squash, badminton or other racquet sports	6	24	45	25	(1585)	41	59	(1076)
11. Dancing	6	18	37	39	(1533)	25	75	(773)
12. Skiing	2	13	34	51	(1544)	29	71	(664)
13. Bowling	1	12	32	55	(1534)	31	69	(664)
14. Golf	2	10	24	64	(1543)	34	66	(529)
15. Soccer	3	7	12	78	(1517)	54	46	(323)
16. Boating/canoeing	1	9	41	48	(1532)	27	73	(702)
17. Pool/billiards	1	6	31	62	(1537)	25	75	(540)
18. Football	1	5	18	76	(1504)	39	61	(329)
19. Table tennis/ping pong	1	4	33	63	(1518)	24	76	(524)
20. Gymnastics	2	2	6	90	(1501)	63	37	(133)
21. Hockey	2	2	4	92	(1509)	69	31	(132)

	Participation Level					Single Sex or Coed		
	Every day or almost every day %	About once or twice a week %	About once a month or less %	Never %	Absolute Number	Single sex %	coed %	Absolute Number
22. Skating	1	3	24	72	(1502)	27	73	(386)
23. Horseback riding	1	2	16	81	(1509)	43	57	(267)
24. Archery	1	2	7	90	(1503)	37	63	(139)
25. Lacrosse	1	1	2	96	(1497)	70	30	(67)
26. Handball	0	1	4	95	(1504)	43	57	(74)
27. Fencing	0	1	2	97	(1490)	41	59	(56)
28. Wrestling	0	0	2	97	(1495)	44	56	(46)

12. How important to you are the following reasons for engaging in sport/fitness activity? Please rank the two (2) most important reasons where 1 = most important, 2 = second most important.

	most important %
Improved health/fitness	54
Relaxation/stress reduction	14
Improved athletic skills/ sense of accomplishment	13
Competition	8
Friendship/sociability	8
Sense of being member of team	2
Winning	1
	(1851)*

**ties permitted*

13. Compared to five years ago, would you say that your participation in sports and fitness activities today has increased, decreased, or remained about the same?

	%
Increased	49
Remained the same	30
Decreased	22
	(1672)

14. Below is a list of statements. For each, please indicate whether most of the time you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly.

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Absolute Number
In general, when I play sports I seek out people of the same skill level regardless of their sex.	34	45	15	7	(1626)
When I seek out people of the same skill level as mine, I often find myself playing with players of the opposite sex.	15	37	30	18	(1582)
I prefer playing with members of my own sex.	21	28	35	16	(1588)
In coed sports, men are often threatened by losing to a woman.	39	43	13	5	(1602)

15. In your sports and fitness activities, how supportive are your family and friends of your efforts?

	Very supportive %	Somewhat supportive %	Not very supportive %	Not at all supportive %	Absolute Number
Romantic companion	72	22	4	2	(1452)
Women friends	67	29	3	1	(1646)
Parent(s)	51	33	11	4	(1571)
Children	50	36	5	9	(607)
Men friends	47	46	6	2	(1562)
Work associates	40	47	10	4	(1525)

16. How often do you participate in sports/fitness activity in a racially mixed group?

	%
Frequently	33
Sometimes	31
Rarely	26
Never	10
	(1626)

17. How accessible are sports/fitness facilities in each of the following locations near you?

	Very accessible %	Not very accessible %	Absolute Number
Educational facility	77	23	(1520)
Health/sports club	77	23	(1548)
Community center/park	74	26	(1560)
Workplace	58	42	(1335)
Other	—	—	

18. How often do you use the following facilities?

	Frequently (several times/week) %	Sometimes (several times/month) %	Never %	Absolute Number
Workplace	**36**	**20**	**45**	**(1289)**
Educational facility	**35**	**30**	**35**	**(1497)**
Health/sports club	**29**	**25**	**46**	**(1539)**
Community center/park	**22**	**46**	**32**	**(1532)**
Other	—	—	—	

19. In your opinion, which of the following are the biggest barriers to increased participation by women in sports and fitness? Please rank two, where 1 = first, 2 = second.

	% First rank
Lack of involvement and training as children	**45**
Few programs outside schools	**14**
Lack of interest	**13**
Inadequate coaching/training instruction	**8**
Lack of equipment/facilities	**8**
Lack of prominent role models	**6**
Inadequate interschool programs	**3**
Inadequate school physical education program	**3**
	(1645)

III. SPECTATOR SPORTS

20. Below is a list of different sports and physical activities. Please indicate how interested you generally are in watching each of the following:

21. IF YOU WATCH THIS TYPE OF COMPETITION, are you more interested in watching the women's competition, the men's competition or both about equally?

	Type of competition				Interest in watching			
	Usually Interested %	Sometimes Interested %	Seldom/ Never Interested %	Absolute Number	Women's competition %	Men's competition %	Both equally %	Absolute Number
1. Gymnastics	62	33	6	(1663)	17	1	82	(1469)
2. Football	61	27	12	(1654)	3	82	15	(1299)
3. Volleyball	60	27	13	(1650)	27	2	73	(1355)
4. Tennis	56	32	12	(1662)	23	1	76	(1396)
5. Softball	51	23	25	(1601)	49	3	48	(1178)
6. Track & Field	50	37	13	(1653)	13	2	85	(1322)
7. Basketball	49	36	15	(1660)	17	21	63	(1384)
8. Swimming or diving	45	43	12	(1662)	7	3	90	(1367)
9. Skiing	42	44	14	(1655)	6	3	91	(1343)
10. Ice Skating	41	39	20	(1653)	12	1	87	(1299)
11. Baseball	37	43	20	(1661)	3	71	26	(1252)
12. Long Distance Running (marathon)	34	39	27	(1653)	16	1	83	(1229)
13. Dancing	29	33	38	(1631)	10	2	88	(1012)
14. Surfing	20	38	42	(1632)	4	13	83	(991)
15. Field Hockey	18	23	59	(1599)	49	6	45	(787)
16. Soccer	17	40	43	(1642)	5	33	62	(995)
17. Golf	17	33	50	(1634)	16	7	77	(984)
18. Weightlifting	17	29	54	(1625)	14	20	66	(838)
19. Horse Racing	15	36	49	(1632)	3	15	82	(801)
20. Hockey (ice)	12	34	54	(1627)	3	67	30	(838)
21. Boxing	11	26	63	(1623)	2	74	24	(696)
22. Bowling	9	26	65	(1628)	6	11	83	(714)
23. Boating	8	26	66	(1608)	5	9	86	(654)
24. Roller Skating	7	21	72	(1699)	10	3	87	(588)
25. Lacrosse	7	20	74	(1539)	17	19	64	(564)
26. Amateur Wrestling	5	22	73	(1640)	3	62	36	(549)
27. Professional Wrestling	5	10	85	(1606)	4	46	50	(459)
28. Auto Racing	5	22	73	(1640)	5	20	75	(659)

22. Does participating in sports or watching sports events bring your family closer together, does it interfere with your family life, does it do both at different times, or does it have no effect on your family life?

	%
Brings family together	42
Interferes with family life	28
Both	—
No effect	3
No family	27
	(1495)

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23. To what do you attribute the unequal media attention that women's sports get? Please rank two (2) where 1 = most important and 2 = second most important.

	Most Important
	%
Dominant male culture	41
Lack of public interest	24
General low level of competition in women's athletics	9
Discrimination by media decisionmakers	25
	(1669)

IV. GENERAL OPINION ON WOMEN IN SPORTS

24. Below is a list of statements. Please indicate whether or not you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Absolute Number
Women's sports should be kept separate from men's so that women are free to develop their own skills	23	46	23	8	(1633)
In this society, a woman is often forced to choose between being an athlete and being feminine.	20	37	21	21	(1660)
Girls should be allowed to play contact sports like football if they want to.	36	37	17	10	(1647)
Intense athletic involvement complicates romantic relationships.	8	33	26	33	(1583)
Female athletes exhibit higher levels of aggression than their non-athletic counterparts.	16	36	26	22	(1572)
A woman athlete's sexual orientation is no one's business but her own.	76	17	4	3	(1623)
Participation in racially mixed sports/fitness groups often reduces prejudice.	49	42	6	3	(1555)
Women have something to teach men about humane competition.	36	42	16	5	(1467)
Participation in sports diminishes a woman's femininity.	3	3	12	82	(1659)
There is too much pressure today for women to be just like men in sports and athletics.	10	32	36	22	(1593)
American women athletes are going to have to take steroids and drugs to compete successfully internationally.	1	3	12	84	(1571)

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IV. GENERAL OPINION ON WOMEN IN SPORTS (continued)

24. Below is a list of statements. Please indicate whether or not you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

	Agree Strongly %	Agree Somewhat %	Disagree Somewhat %	Disagree Strongly %	Absolute Number
If young girls compete successfully on the athletic fields, they will be better able to compete successfully in later life.	**57**	**36**	**5**	**2**	**(1619)**
What a woman does is feminine.	**40**	**31**	**20**	**9**	**(1459)**
Compared to other women athletes, women of color are less able to convert their athletic success into commercial success off the field.	**12**	**38**	**30**	**20**	**(1333)**

25. (IF YOU AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT WITH THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING STATEMENT ON WOMEN OF COLOR) Why did you answer as you did? Please rank two (2) of the reasons listed below where 1 = most important and 2 = next most important.

	First rank
Inability to obtain corporate sponsorship	**32**
Lack of media attention	**31**
Lack of role models	**16**
Allowing athletic goals to supercede educational goals	**12**
Other	**9**
	(774)

26. In your opinion, the federal government's title IX program promoting equality of educational and athletic opportunity for women has been:

	%
Very successful	**11**
Somewhat successful	**69**
Somewhat unsuccessful	**15**
Very unsuccessful	**5**
	(1351)

V. BACKGROUND

27. Are you Female ( ) or Male ( )?
Only respondents identifying themselves as female were analyzed in this report.

28. In what year were you born?

Age	%
25 & below	**25**
26–30	**23**
31–37	**27**
38 +	**24**
	(1675)

29. What is your primary racial or ethnic origin?

	%
White	91
Black	4
Hispanic	2
Asian	1
Native American	1
Other	1
	(1678)

30. What is the last grade of school you completed?

	%
Some high school or less	3
High school graduate	8
Some college	21
College graduate	29
Post graduate	38
	(1675)

31. Are you presently:

	%
Single	51
Married	28
Living with partner	13
Divorced	5
Separated	2
Widowed	1
	(1669)

32. When you were growing up:

How many older brothers did you have?
How many **total** brothers and sisters?
How many older sisters?

Number of older brothers	%	Total Siblings	%	Number of older sisters	%
0	54	0	8	0	59
1	29	1	23	1	27
2	11	2	27	2	10
3+	6	3	18	3+	4
	(1682)	4	11		(1682)
		5+	13		
			(1682)		

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33. How many daughters do you have?
How many sons?
How many children do you have now living at home?

Daughters	%	Sons	%	Children at home	%
0	84	0	83	0	80
1	10	1	11	1	10
2	4	2	4	2	7
3+	2	3+	2	3+	3
	(1682)		(1682)		(1682)

34. Which of the following categories best describes your current occupational status?

	%
Employed full time	70
Employed part time	13
Retired	1
Looking for work	2
Work in the Home	2
In school	10
Other	2
	(1674)

35. What was your total household income category before taxes for the past year, 1984?

	%
$0-$10,000	14
$11,000-$20,000	24
$21,000-$30,000	5
$31,000-$40,000	16
$41,000-$50,000	10
More than $50,000	11
	(1607)

36. What if any position do you hold in women's athletics?

	Paid %	Volunteer %
Coach	28	21
Hold no position	27	42
Physical Education Teacher	25	2
Official	10	8
Athletic Director	4	1
Trainer	2	8
Professional Athlete	1	2
Other	5	14
	(1716)	(1056)

37. If feminism is defined as being committed to equality for women in all aspects of life, how strong would you say your feminist views are?

	%
Very strong	**41**
Strong	**25**
Somewhat strong	**20**
Not very strong	**6**
I do not consider myself a feminist	**8**
	(1650)

38. In which of the following areas should more research on women in sports be done? Please rate each area on a scale of 1 to 7 with 7 being the most important area for research and 1 being the least important.

	Least Important						Most Important	% 6 + 7	Absolute Number
Physiology of women as athletes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**70**	**(1635)**
Organization and governance of women's sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**62**	**(1593)**
Socialization of women in sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**44**	**(1605)**
Minority women in sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**24**	**(1600)**
Coed sports participation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**22**	**(1609)**

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